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nantwich farm vets

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January 2018

Dates for your diary

5th January
7.30pm
Client Christmas Party
Worleston Village Hall

11th January
7.45pm
Myth, Muck and Magic: New insights into lameness in dairy cows with Jon Huxley
Reaseheath College

Happy New Year!

Looking forward to seeing you all at the rescheduled client "Christmas" party on Friday 5th January at Worleston Village Hall at 7.30pm for food and drinks!

NEW Combination pneumonia treatment
We are now stocking *Zeleris* which contains florfenicol (NuFlor) and meloxicam (Metacam) in a single injection. This works out cheaper per dose than Resflor and provides longer lasting pain relief.

Where are you injecting your cows?

New research from Nottingham University suggests that many vets and farmers are risking damaging the sciatic nerve and even injecting straight into the pelvic cavity when they give injections in the rump especially in thin cows. Ideally intramuscular injections should go in the neck or if the neck is impractical then aim for a hands width behind the hook bone where there is more muscle and no underlying structures. Don't be afraid to ask a vet to change site!

Feeding winter crops

We have recently seen issues on a few farms after they have moved cattle onto fodder beet. This month vet **Sarah Williamson** discusses transitioning cattle onto winter crops

Transitioning the rumen means adapting the rumen bugs to a new diet. It takes 15-21 days for rumen bugs to adapt properly to a major change in diet as it requires different types of bacteria to digest a grass-based diet compared to a winter-crop based diet. If the rumen is not adapted to the new diet then the pH of the rumen drops causing acidosis. The higher the diet is going to be in fast fermentable carbohydrates, the bigger the risk of acidosis and therefore the greater need for careful transitioning.

Winter crops in order of acidosis risk:

1. Sugar beet
2. Fodder beet
3. Swedes
4. Winter turnips
5. Kale
6. Forage rape

Why is fodder beet a risky crop when it comes to acidosis?

It's generally a high yielding crop. So for example if you have a 25T/ha crop this means the crop yields at 2.5kgDM/sqm which can bring in challenges if you want to feed only small allowances to cows when you first start putting cows on crops.

It has a very high sugar content (>65% sugar levels in the bulbs are not uncommon) together with a low fibre content (NDF of 12% is common).

High bulb:leaf ratio. Leaves have higher NDF and lower sugar levels in comparison to the bulbs.

High palatability of especially the bulbs; some varieties have less palatable leaves making them higher risk.

The potential consequences of an inadequate winter crop transition period:

Deaths – most common in first 2 weeks after initial introduction to crop.

Permanent damage to the rumen, liver and hoof structure – leading to decreased productivity and increased susceptibility to acidosis, lameness, metabolic disease and/or death in the future.

N.B. Fodder beet also contains nitrates and oxalates both of which are toxic. Nitrate poisoning causes breathlessness, weakness, tremors and in extreme cases brown membranes and death. Oxalates bind calcium and magnesium so can lead to milk fever and staggers leading to sudden death. If the rumen has time to adapt the rumen bacteria will change to break down these toxins and they aren't a problem.

Important transition points:

Never put stock on a new crop break hungry

Have plenty of silage available and accessible close to the crop face

Ideally leave a grass headland so that cows will have enough physical space on day 1 of the crop transition to have only a tiny crop allocation. If you haven't left a grass headland, then dropping the fence between the crop paddock and the adjacent paddock is another option.

Day 1 crop allocation: Cows 1-2 kgDM; In-calf heifers (R2) 1 kgDM; First-grazing heifers (R1) 0.5-1 kgDM; followed by crop allocation increase of 1 kgDM every 2nd day for cows and In-calf heifers, and 0.5 kgDM for first-grazing heifers until target crop levels have been reached.

Make sure you check power on the fence line multiple times a day to avoid break outs

If your cows are getting transported to their winter grazing block remember that due to stress of transport the acidity level in the rumen increases too. Hence the need for plenty of fibre on arrival and ideally no start of crop feeding (if you can avoid it) on the day of arrival.

If you've been feeding a few kilos of fodder beet to your late lactation cows still be very careful when those cows arrive on fodder beet for their dry period because a few kilos of supplemental beet is very different to the beet being 100% of the ration!

Sugar digesting rumen bugs have a high turnover rate so they disappear rather fast from the rumen if not constantly "fed". Not feeding of crops for a few days therefore means starting from scratch again when it comes to transition management.

Phosphorus

Wintering cows on fodder beet could increase the incidence of phosphorus deficiency complicated milk fever ("creeper cows"). These cases initially look to respond to milk fever treatment but then relapse and, despite being very bright and alert, they fail to recover if not treated appropriately. If fodder beet feeding is accompanied by a good amount of high quality grass silage, the need to supplement with additional phosphorus may not be required. In case of high crop:supplement ratios and/or poor quality silage the need increases. Supplementing with 50 gms/c/d of DCP (=DiCalciumPhosphate) during the entire feeding period is an effective prevention strategy.

Iodine

Iodine deficiency tends to cause dead, weak and sometimes hairless calves. Fetal death can occur at any stage of gestation. Goitrogens (found in white clover and brassicas) can impair iodine uptake by the thyroid gland. These goitrogens may increase iodine requirements by 4 times. If you are feeding brassicas it is likely that you will need to supplement iodine. Kale has the most goitrogens and normal supplementation levels may not be enough. Blood samples can easily assess the iodine status of your stock and Iodine boluses can be given as required.

Copper

Copper is usually minimally available in brassica crops and fodder beet. Copper is stored in the liver and used by the cow for reproduction, milk production, calf growth and development. Having sufficient storage levels of copper heading into the winter, should allow copper to be utilised from their reserves when it is not readily available through the winter months. In some herds copper can also cause toxicity problems so please get liver biopsies done on your cows to assess their copper status.

Clostridial diseases

We have seen cases of sudden deaths on fodder beet which have been caused by clostridial diseases. This is probably due to the combination of a high sugar load on the intestines and also ingestion of soil which contains clostridial spores. It is advised that cattle are vaccinated with two doses of Bravoxin four weeks apart before moving to their winter grazing.

New welfare recommendations when disbudding calves

In the interests of animal welfare, the British Cattle Veterinary Association and British Veterinary Association believe that calves should be routinely provided with appropriate analgesia to manage pain associated with disease or necessary veterinary and husbandry procedures. Specifically, they recommend the use of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs e.g. Metacam, Finadyne or Ketofen in addition to local anaesthesia when conducting disbudding and castration in calves.

Disbudding (whether by hot iron or caustic paste) and castration (whether carried out surgically or by "bloodless" methods such as using rubber rings or burdizzo) cause both acute pain at the time of the procedure and chronic pain, as evidenced by behavioural changes, for a variable time following the procedure. The acute pain of dehorning is controlled by using local anaesthetic (Adrenacaine), however the longer-term pain that outlasts this anaesthesia can have a significant adverse impact on calf health and welfare. Research has shown that the pain associated with dehorning lasts up to 44 hours. Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs have been shown to reduce the signs of pain in this post-operative period in a wide range of research studies.

The benefits of using Metacam when dehorning include:

- Reduced stress responses – heart rate, respiratory rate and cortisol
- Reduced sensitivity to pain in the dehorned area – positive impact on suckling behaviour
- Reduced frequency of pain related behaviour – less ear flicking and head shaking

Metacam is now licensed to control the pain associated with disbudding and has been shown to provide pain relief for up to 3 days. Our vet techs provide a regular disbudding service and can administer Metacam at the time to give you peace of mind. Please contact the office for more information.

Vets Mobile Numbers

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